

Ad Hoc Committee on Community Policing Third Report to Board of Trustees: Recommendations on New Departmental Policies to Consider

After reviewing the community survey results, the proposed policy chapters provided by Lexipol, and through discussions among our committee, we have put together a list of further recommendations for the Village and the Police Department to explore and implement. Some of these are little steps while others are substantial; some are short term fixes, while others are long term projects. While these recommendations represent views expressed by a majority of the members of the committee, it should be stated that not every recommendation as presented has the unanimous support of the entire committee.

COMMUNITY RELATIONS

Enhanced Police Department Website – The Village shall create a comprehensive website for the department, including contact information, an introduction from the Officer In Charge, names and headphotos of the officers, information about upcoming events (“coffee with a cop”, CPR Trainings, etc.), a portal for service requests such as “dark house” supervision, a portal for submitting officer conduct reports, monthly reports to the Trustees, and information about how to request copies of Departmental Policies, contracts, or other public records.

Most importantly, the website should include a comprehensive FAQ section, compiled with the advice of the OIC and other officers, outlining the most frequent or misunderstood questions to triage requests to the appropriate resources, such as information about parking regulations, contact information for the village and town courts, or which non-emergency services are provided CSPD, Putnam County Sherrifs, or the fire and ambulance corps. With time invested on the front end, this resource will hopefully reduce the queries outside of our jurisdiction which otherwise get directed to the OIC or the Village Clerk.

Officer Name Tags – The Village shall phase-in universal name tags for each officer showing their first name or first initial, as well as their last name.

Accessible Police Department – As the Village explores long term capital planning projects, it is critical that the Police Department be housed in an ADA-compliant space accessible for all visitors and employees.

Impartial Officer Conduct Feedback Venue – The Village shall establish an impartial partner, such as the Philipstown Hub, to receive “anonymized” but trackable complaints or praise regarding officer conduct, for anyone uncomfortable addressing those matters directly with the Officer In Charge or the Mayor and Board of Trustees, or using an online portal. The Village

shall reimburse said partner for all reasonable expenses incurred, and shall and announce publicize this alternative venue to the community.

INFORMATION GATHERING & INFORMATION SHARING

Incident Reporting & Record Retention – To easily and efficiently track the types of calls and actions in which CSPD is engaged, and to spot long-term trends or isolated spikes, the Village shall develop and utilize a more streamlined and relevant digital record keeping system, which will allow the Department to compare rates of calls against previous months or years, and to compare rates of calls occurring during specific shifts (day, evening, overnight).

Once this is implemented, OIC monthly reports to Trustees should be limited to a highlighted analysis of the following:

- Number of calls vs number of arrests or summonses issued
- Number of traffic stops vs number of traffic tickets issued
- Number of calls occurring during each shift
- Number of traffic stops occurring during each shift
- Number of parking violations
- Number of moving violations
- Number of aided calls with some sense for what
- Number of times CSPD needed aid and for what
- Number of domestic violence incidents
- Number of drug-related calls
- Number of arrests, and for what
- Number and nature of any service complaints or compliments

Domestic Violence Reporting – Until this system is developed, all Domestic Violence calls, however minor, shall be highlighted in monthly reports by OIC to Trustees.

ADDITIONAL NEW POLICIES AND SERVICES TO CONSIDER

Post-traumatic Event Support Intervention: The Village shall partner with local community resources (Mental Health, Public Health, Chaplains, Philipstown Hub, etc.) to engage and train a team of volunteers who can be mobilized in moments of crisis to provide proactive emotional support, and as an additional resource for the CSPD when responding to, or in the aftermath of, potentially traumatic calls, such as a homicide, suicide or hate crime.

CSPD Mutual Aid Expenses: The Village shall research policies in similar “outdoor recreation” communities to determine whether and how to recover expenses for CSPD rescue calls on public or private parkland through directly billing the recipient of aid, or the State Department of Parks and Recreation, and modify all future mutual aid agreements accordingly.

Traffic Court Disclosures: The Village shall review and modify the entire “pre-trial” conference for traffic and parking violations, providing all participants with thorough, unbiased information about the process and their options, and removing uniformed officers from the proceedings. The Village shall examine the actual requirements of NYS Law and establish a policy which reduces the opportunity – or perception of an opportunity – for bribery, coercion, miscommunication, or unfair treatment, particularly as it pertains to non-native English speakers.

FINALLY, THE BIG QUESTION

Do villagers want a police department? While individual members have their own views on whether, how, and to what extent the Village should maintain an independent police department, as a Committee we will not issue an opinion. We do recognize, however, that a critical data point missing from the discussion is the opinion of each villager, not just the most vocal advocates or skeptics. As such, the Village shall develop a strategy and tactics to impartially educate the public about the costs, responsibilities, and consequences of maintaining or absolving the department, and the Village shall commit to placing a non-binding referendum on the 2024 general election ballot asking the very simple question “Should Cold Spring have its own police department?” Only through a village-wide vote can we understand the scale of support – or desire for change – and make future plans accordingly.

Respectfully submitted,

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